this issue. Some other neighbouring countries have officially expressed concern over missile and nuclear weapon proliferation in the region and reiterated their commitment to the Comprehensive Test Bsin Treaty (CTBT).

The three tests conducted on 11 May were with a fission device with a yield of 12 kilo tonnes (kT), a thermonuclear device with a yield of about 43 kT and a sub-kilo tonne device.

India now has a credible nuclear deterrent and these tests provide an assurance to the Indian people that Government would attach the highest priority to addressing India's security concerns.

Offer made by American Special Envoy on Nuclear Cooperation

190. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a)whether during the recent visit of the US-team in April this year, following the Pak-test of Ghauri-missile, the American special envoy had indicated that the US was open to the idea of revival of nuclear cooperation for peaceful purposes; and

(b)if so, what was the precise stand taken by the US team and what headway has since been made in that direction for reviving such "cooperation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) and (b) India and the United States have been engaged in a wide-ranging dialogue on bilateral, regional and global issues intended to broaden and deepen our mutually beneficial relations and identify areas of cooperation. Cooperation in some areas of science and technology including nuclear power generation have been discussed in a preliminary way as part of this wise-ranging dialogue. Nuclear cooperation, however, did not come up for discussion duping the special envoy's visit in April, 1998.

Response to UN Secretary-General efforts to establish a Multipolar World

191. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a)whether India has extended full support to UN Secretary-General in his efforts in establishing a multi-polar world to bring about global peace and development; and

(b)if so, what specific steps have been taken by him in that direction, and Government's response thereto during the past six months?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY'OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) and (b) The UN Secretary-General has proposed a reforms package to revitalise the UN. The Government has welcomed the UN Secretary-General's efforts in this direction and is actively participating in the discussions underway in the General Assembly on these proposals with the objective of making the UN more responsive to the concerns of the majority of its member countries viz. the developing countries.

Racket in Issuance of Passport

192. SHRI GAYA SINGH:
SHRI JALALUDIN ANSARI:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a)whether Government's attention has been drawn to the newsitem appearing in the Express Newsline section of the Indian Express dated 9th April, 1998, under the caption 'Psst...Want a Passport? Rs. 17000 please'; and

(b)if so, the details in this regard and Government's reaction to the touts' operation and alleged involvement of the policemen and the passport office employees in offering the passport to anyone without any verification and proper documents but for a price?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Government have taken several measures in the recent past to counter the illegal activities of touts and unauthorised agents in the grant of passport services to the public. These include de-recognition of travel agents as an authorised channel for servicing passport applications, issue of passport application forms free of charge, augmentation in the number of passport offices and collection centres in the country, despatch of passports directly to the addressees by post, etc. The activities of touts outside the RPO, Delhi, have been brought to the attention of the local police from time to lime and police action against them has been intensified. Investigations so far have not established any definite linkage between the touts and employees of the Passport Office at Delhi. However, vigilance is being strengthened at the Passport Office at Delhi and other places. Government is also making efforts to increase public awareness of the various facilities available at the Passport Offices so as to minimise the influence and activities of unauthorised agents. Passports are issued only after proper verification and examination of the requisite documents.

Discussion on Security Issues with USA

193. DR. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a)whether Government have discussed their security issues with USA recently;

(b)if so, the details thereof; and

(c)if not, whether Government propose to undertake such strategic dialogue in view of threats from the neighbours?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) to (c) Over the last several months, the United States and India have been engaged in a wide ranging dialogue covering bilateral, regional and global issues including security-related issues. - During these meetings, we explained our security concerns and the rationale of our defence-related policies. The purpose of this dialogue has been to enable better understanding and appreciation of each other's points of view and to identify areas of cooperation.

Expenditure incurred on Foreign Tours of Union Ministers

194. SHRI JANARDAN YADAV: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) The details of Union Ministers who undertook foreign tours during the cur rent year;

(b)The total expenditure incurred from public exchequer on their tours; and

(c)The purpose of each Minister's foreign trip?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) to (c) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Exposing of Pakistan's pursuit for Nuclear Weapons

195. DR. MOHAN BABU: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a)whether Government have conveyed their concern over US firms role in Pakistan nuclear programme;

(b)if so, the details thereof; and

(c)the other steps taken to expose Pakistan's clandestine pursuit of nuclear weapons?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) and (b) Reports in the media alleging the involvement of US firms in Pakistan's nuclear programme have been brought to the attention of our interlocutors in the US. High level discussions with US officials have been held on a range of subjects of mutual interest, including on